Envoicing Silent Objects: Art and Literature at the Site of the Canadian Landscape

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The conjunction of *art*, *literature* and *place* in this special issue provides an occasion for considering the intersection of visual art and the literary narrative at the site of that most definitive of place-markers in the history of Canadian nationhood, the landscape painting. As characterized by the iconic, overtly nationalist works of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven in the early part of the twentieth century, Canadian *place* consists, very precisely, of *landscape*—no more, no less. To gaze into a painting by Thomson, Harris, Lismer, Varley, Macdonald or Jackson is to be confronted by an icy, forbidding and—crucially—*silent* world. If there is any trace of humanity to be found here, it can perhaps be located only in the eerily humanoid form of a windswept tree, a stand-in for the pioneer-settler engaged in ceaseless combat with a wilderness every bit as white and hardy as he. This tree seems perpetually on the brink of succumbing to the elements that continually besiege it, and we can be certain that, were it to fall, it would make no sound.

In isolation, such representations of landscape guard their silence jealously, burying the voices and histories of entire peoples in a static, atemporal moment that is seemingly as inhospitable to narrative as to the unequipped traveller. In recent decades, however, the apparently self-evident atemporality of the visual artwork has begun to unravel, at least in scholarly circles: paintings now belong to the realm of "visual culture," an interdisciplinary domain that permits the discursive and narrative properties of visual art to be laid open to critical scrutiny. For a generation, critics have been striving to return the silenced voices of Canada's dispossessed First Nations peoples to the Group of Seven's paintings, charting the long and complex history of complicity between landscape representation and the ideological and material apparatuses of colonialism and settlement, from the declaration of a *terra nullius* to legitimize initial settlement, to the emergence of a white settler national identity. Thanks to these critics, most contemporary scholars now recognize that, if we are to be moved by the timeless, statuesque, sculptural forms of the Group's finest works, we must also acknowledge that they are replete with suppressed narratives of conquest and erasure: that this is a body of work whose ideological thrust closely parallels the representative systems of domination characteristic of imperialist discourses the world over.[1]

It is not my intention here merely to ask again which voices, presences and narratives are silenced, suppressed and excluded by the sense of Canadian place promoted by the Group of Seven—though this question, of course, must guide any responsible investigation into the Group's enduring legacy. Rather, I want to examine some of the ways in which art and literature converge upon the site of this landscape, generating an *ekphrastic* con-

ception of place which reminds us constantly that every framed, static view of a landscape represents a story house, a repository of narratives concerning all those peoples who have inhabited this place, interacted with it, or claimed it as their own. To this end, I seek first to explore some of the narratives consigned to this repository, and then to consider how they are accessed, opened up and reconfigured in one specific literary work: Margaret Atwood's complex short story "Death by Landscape," from her 1991 collection *Wilderness Tips*.

Two principles will guide me in my exploration. The first is the notion of *counter-discourse*, a term used in postcolonial theory to describe an engagement with a colonialist text by a postcolonial writer. For the postcolonial writer, a counter-discursive engagement is one that operates *within* but against the prevailing discourses of imperialism, an engagement that offers more hope of success than a simple, binary opposition to discourses as totalizing and wide-ranging as those of imperialism. Operating from within becomes even more important when challenging something as oblique and subtle as the discourses of a *painting*. As will become evident, it is imperative for a writer first to situate her—or himself within the frame of the artwork, before s/he can hope to attempt to engage it in a meaningful conversation. This notion of a *conversation* with the silent, atemporal artwork brings me to my second guiding notion, that of *ekphrasis*. Ekphrasis, a term which I will discuss in more detail below, refers to the literary description of visual art objects. As we shall see, the literary technique of ekphrasis is capable of enabling radical critical engagements with visual modes of imperial representation such as the landscape painting, lending the artwork a temporal dimension which liberates it from its frame, and requires it to answer for itself in the discursive space beyond.

The notion of ekphrasis is necessary in this context because of the overwhelmingly linguistic focus of postcolonial theories of discourse and counter-discourse. Given its poststructuralist roots, it is perhaps unsurprising that postcolonial theory conceptualizes *discourse* primarily in terms of the written word, a discussion which in practice almost always focuses on the *narrative* text. Discussions of postcolonial *counter*-discourse therefore focus on narrative strategies which see an author occupy one or more sites of the original narrative in order to subvert and unsettle its underlying assumptions. Literary "writing back" to literary texts involves a struggle between two contestatory narratives, in what might be seen as a "public" contest, since both texts are made available to a general readership. The revisionist text relies heavily on an assumption that the ideologies of its predecessor are visible, or at least accessible, to this readership, coded into the textual narrative. The means by which the text achieves its aesthetic effects, that is to say, is also the means by which it visibly constructs and transmits ideology. As a result of counter-discursive contests, the colonial text—while its status as a work of art is left undiminished—is displaced from its authoritative position with respect to colonial discourses. Engagement with the discourses of a visual art

object, however, poses a challenge of an altogether different order, owing to a far greater disjunct between the aesthetic and ideological. Rather than be allowed to proliferate as they do in a literary text, the underlying narratives of a visual art object are collapsed into an instantaneous moment of representation, their inherent temporality subsumed into the static, spatial plane of the painting.

W.J.T. Mitchell, arguably the world's leading theorist of text-image relations, captures this discursive collapse perfectly when he refers to the landscape painting as "something like the 'dreamwork' of imperialism, unfolding its own movement in time and space from a central point of origin and folding back on itself to disclose both utopian fantasies of the perfected imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence and unsuppressed resistance."[2] Mitchell's description of landscape as an imperial representational technology elegantly captures those qualities that fuel the characteristic ambivalence of contemporary critical responses to the Group of Seven's paintings, carefully balancing the "perfected imperial prospect" (the untamed, "virgin" wilderness) against the incompletely suppressed voices of Canada's First Peoples. Most importantly, however, Mitchell's identification of a "folding" within the moment of the landscape image speaks to a dual temporality in that single moment, at once absolutely static and replete with narrative.

To engage with the underlying narratives of a visual art object, then—to "unfold" that which is embedded in it—necessarily entails the antecedent step of restoring a temporal dimension to the static moment of visual art. A simple description of the artwork already achieves this, since the conversion of visual modes of representation to linguistic modes is also a translation from the primarily spatial to the predominantly temporal. While a visual artist may use various techniques to lead the eye and suggest compositionally which objects in a painting the viewer is to focus her/his attention on first, a linguistic description fixes an order to these visual elements, thus concretizing viewer perceptions of the work. To describe a work of art is to generate a temporally sequenced narrative, which necessarily reflects an ideological position on the painting through its prioritizing of certain visual elements—and their discursive counterparts—at the expense of others. As we proceed, it will become clear that the inevitably ideological nature of such representational translations lends them enormous potential to be utilized strategically and counter-discursively against non-narrative modes of imperial representation.

Ekphrastic representation has not, it should be noted, traditionally been discussed in terms of its radical critical potential. Ekphrasis is generally viewed merely as underlining aesthetic affinities between the visual and literary arts, with examples of the latter usually coming from poetry. However, James A.W. Heffernan highlights its counter-discursive potential when he suggests that it delivers from the static image of visual art "its embryonically narrative impulse," and hence "envoic[es] a silent object."[3] Heffernan's con-

ception of ekphrasis offers, at least implicitly, the possibility that literary engagements with the non-literary arts may function to render visible the narrative discourses hidden within a moment of visual representation owing to this medium's assumed atemporality. The *interartistic* translation of the visual into the literary narrativizes the ideological discursive elements coded into what initially appears to be a purely aesthetic entity, revealing its hitherto untapped discursive plenitude. In this important respect, ekphrastic representation parallels the processes inherent in both critical and creative postcolonial engagements with colonial discourses. Edward W. Said's conception of a secular "critical consciousness," for instance, owes much to the engagements of Michel Foucault with a "modern discourse" whose "very effectiveness [...] is linked to its invisibility."[4] "The imperative" of such engagements, Said suggests, is "to make [...] discourse appear within [an] invisible field of dispersion."[5] The austere, silent, atemporal plane of the Group of Seven canvas can, of course, be viewed as just such an "invisible field of dispersion," from which the discourses of imperialism are to be recovered.

The "invisibility" of the discourses dispersed through and behind the visual plane of the Group's landscape paintings arises as a result of what I earlier termed a disjunct between their aesthetic and ideological dimensions. The paintings' considerable success in keeping the unpalatable aspects of their nationalistic ideology invisible to the public gaze has enabled their wilderness aesthetic to continue to exert a substantial influence on formulations of Canadian identity long after the officially sanctioned view of white settlers' inherent superiority has given way to a constitutional enshrinement of multiculturalism. For evidence of the astonishingly enduring legacy of the Group's particular brand of colonialist landscape art, one need look no further than the wealth of reproductive prints, calendars and coffee-table books through which their paintings continue to be disseminated. This sustained popularity contrasts sharply with the fate accorded to many of the Group's interlocutors and sympathizers, including the ethnographers and anthropologists with whom its members were in frequent correspondence. While these figures shared a great deal of common ideological ground with the Group's members, however, their works have been vastly less enduring. Openly expressed in narrative form, their problematically imperialist underlying assumptions are available for all to see in their works, which has resulted in the relegation of these texts to little more than historical curiosities. With the Group of Seven, needless to say, the story has been very different.

This is not to suggest that the narratives underlying their works have not been explored—as I alluded to earlier, an enormous amount of critical work has been given over to their vigorous interrogation, but only rarely has this criticism reached beyond academia and the fairly narrow confines of art-critical circles. The temporal folding of these narratives into a single moment of representation has ensured that they have remained obscured from large sections of the public who continue to view them in national terms. Only

relatively recently, at the crucial site of intersection between literature and visual art, have counter-discursive works such as Atwood's begun to open out the conversation between the Group's white settler nationalism and the inclusive self-image of contemporary Canada into what may truly be termed a public arena.

Before going on to discuss Atwood's engagement with the Group's paintings in detail, I will first attempt to offer an impression of the ideological narratives contained within them, along with a reading of the representational steps by which these narratives are folded into the spatial plane of the landscape image. It is, as I suggested earlier, the selective exclusions performed by the Group's empty wilderness paintings that have drawn the most stirring anti-imperialist criticism. In a 1994 essay, for example, Scott Watson went so far as to employ the incendiary term "cultural genocide" in reference to the Group's colonialist agenda.[6] In Canada as in other settler colonial nations, the emptiness of the wilderness—the notion of it as unspoiled, uninhabited country waiting to be discovered by white settlers, as opposed to terrain already populated by indigenous peoples—has consistently been a foundational legitimizing myth supporting settler colonialism. Watson and others have argued that the Group's landscapes are heavily complicit in perpetuating this myth, as systems of representation which "function to erase First Nations' presence, polity, and, finally, humanity."[7] In framing his critique of the Group's works within a discussion of Allan McEachern's landmark Supreme Court judgement against First Nations land title claims, Watson attributes an enduring imaginative legacy to their representations of wilderness. He traces a lineage between such representations and Judge McEachern's apparent implication that "Indians are a part of nature,"[8] a selective, ahistorical assumption which draws on a desire to construct a paradigm of white, male Canadianness similar to that found in the Group's wilderness aesthetic.

I differ somewhat from many other critics in my conception of the precise representative strategies via which the Group's landscapes perform these erasures. The majority of critics who have engaged with their constructions of Canada's Northern wilderness have tended to view them through the lens of the agrarian settler myth, in which the "virgin" lands of the newly-settled nation are constructed as feminine-gendered vessels of fertility for the exploitation and sustenance of the masculine-gendered pioneer-settler. While this model is appropriate to many settler nations, I would suggest that something rather different happens in the Group's constructions of the Canadian wilderness, revolving around a central body-landscape conceit which underscores their constructions. I shall attempt to unpack the Group's particular version of this conceit by adopting J. Douglas Porteous's notion of the body-landscape metaphor as a two-way "interacting system, whereby landscape is seen as body but also body is regarded as landscape." [9] The negotiation of the body-landscape relation which forms the core of the Group's wilderness aesthetic may in fact be viewed in terms of two separate conflicting but simultaneously occurring systems of representation, each with its own internally consistent scheme of gendering.

First, the "masculine" aspect of this complex construction: the rendering of body as landscape. This trope is usually accomplished in the Group's works by having the landscape consume the body, often literally. Traces of this influential aspect of the Group's imaginative strategy are to be found throughout twentieth century discussions of Canadian nationhood, none more resonant than Northrop Frye's (in)famous assertion that "to enter Canada is a matter of being silently swallowed by an alien continent."[10] The context for this system of representation is best explored by referring to two key formative events which occurred before the Group of Seven acquired its name. In 1917, the artist Tom Thomson, a friend and associate of the artists who would subsequently form the Group, drowned in Algonquin Park. Thomson, who had been instrumental in introducing his fellow artists to the rugged North country which would prove their inspiration, has since been elevated to the status of a mythic figure, as the very embodiment of the version of masculine Canadian identity propagated by the Group. As Sherrill Grace suggests,

> His symbolic particularity derives from his Canadian-ness, or from what is repeatedly *claimed* as his Canadian-ness—his persistent association with "the North," his masculine intimacy with nature [...] as measured by his virile command of canoe, fishing rod, back pack, and camp fire, and his perceived, uncanny ability to capture the essence of Canada in paint.[11]

While the Group's notion of Canadianness would incorporate all of these qualities, however, it is a particular allegorical relation between Thomson's death and a critical event in the shaping of Canada's national consciousness that is of especial relevance to their imagining of the body as landscape. For, while Thomson was being "swallowed" by his beloved North, thousands of his compatriots were being similarly consumed by what was, for them, an "alien continent": Europe. For the young nation, the barely believable brutality of the First World War brought questions of national identity into sharper relief than ever before.

The Group were acutely aware of the significance of the Great War to their own national project. Watson relates how Lawren Harris "hoped that the 'swells of national feeling' induced by 'the long list of casualties' could be redirected to 'a more creative and magnificent communion than the communion of war' through wilderness images."[12] It is in this ideological climate that the conflation of Thomson's drowning with the deaths of those on the "long list of casualties" was to turn him into the Group's own allegorical "war dead." While this has been widely commented on by critics, however, there remains some uncertainty as to the precise allegorical function fulfilled by Thomson as "war dead." Watson effectively highlights the potential for contradiction in this construction when he states that "Thomson's death in the wild could be *contrasted* with the carnage of the First World War. In a way, this solitary death in the wild was *on the same continuum* as the deaths in the trenches of Europe."[13] Thomson's death, Watson

seems to suggest, is at once in opposition to, and in parallel with, the deaths of Canadians in the First World War. The confusion here lies not in Watson's articulation of the connection between Thomson and the European war dead; it lies rather in the complex construction by which the pristine, natural environment of Thomson's death is conflated with the sharply contrasting man-made desolation of war-torn Europe. This contradiction can be resolved with reference to the body-as-landscape model, as I shall attempt to illustrate by examining a 1918 painting by A.Y. Jackson entitled *A Copse, Evening*.[14]

Compositionally, this painting is similar to many of Jackson's other works: the foreground is dominated by the terrain of the landscape, which is of indeterminate consistency, offering the possibility that an adventurer might be able to pass over it unscathed, but equally suggesting that the land might at any point "swallow" the unwary traveller. The middle distance is dominated by a line of gnarled, twisted trees, beyond which the uninhabited (and uninhabitable) terrain stretches to the horizon.

What may seem, at first glance, to be the most obvious and banal statement—that this painting is instantly recognizable as a Jackson canvas, and bears a considerable resemblance to many of his wilderness images—becomes, on consideration of its context, the most striking. Because this is not a painting of the Northern wilderness, but of war-torn Europe, where Jackson served as a soldier before being commissioned to return to the front line as a war artist. Closer inspection reveals figures in the bottom right-hand corner, walking on a precarious path of planks constructed to prevent their falling into—and being literally "swallowed" by—the rancid mud. These soldier figures troop off into the distance towards a vanishing point on the horizon, becoming indistinguishable from the distant trees as they do so. Only the searchlight beams give any clue as to the existence of a human enemy (though even these seem to emanate from an indeterminate location); the enemy explicitly identified here is the hostile landscape. The constant threat posed to the body by the landscape constructs the environment as masculine and warlike, a force which will consume any humans who do not match it in combat. It is deeply significant, therefore, that Jackson's system of representation apparently makes no qualitative distinction between this environment and the Canadian wilderness. They are ultimately not oppositional but parallel constructions of environment, and it is this which allows for the allegorical conflation of Tom Thomson and the Canadian war dead.

The "erasure" of First Nations peoples performed by the Group's landscape paintings, then, stems ultimately from their conception of the Northern wilderness as equal and opposite to their own combative model of Canadianness. The wilderness is empty of native peoples because they are Other to the Group's white male national paradigm, and are therefore systematically erased from (and by implication *by*) the landscape. In this formulation, however, the wilderness must be empty of *all* those who are Other

to this paradigm of Canadianness, meaning that traces not only of native but also feminine presence must be removed. If, as Watson suggests, the "whiteness" of the wilderness is mapped directly onto the desire for a paradigm of all-white Canadianness, it follows that its "maleness" is also a mirror image of the masculine Canadian ideal. This forms an important strand of the gender problematics of the Group of Seven's vision, which is often obscured from critical view by the assumption that the wilderness is imagined as feminine. In depicting the wilderness as entirely absent of human figures, the Group's artists ensured that what remained would be a mirror image of (their perceptions of) themselves and the nation: rugged, combative and masculine. Hence the problematic inherent in this aspect of the Group's construction of Wilderness is not the feminization of the land itself, but the erasure and consumption of the feminine by a masculine-gendered environment.

But what of the bodies that were not consumed? The Group's aesthetic of wilderness drew its power from the vast expanses of emptiness their paintings depicted, yet if they were to differentiate themselves from those whom the wilderness had consumed—to demonstrate that they had pitted themselves against its power and survived—their own presence at the site of encounter needed to be documented. While he does not frame it in these combative terms, Jonathan Bordo identifies in the work of the Group and Tom Thomson a tension between the aesthetic desire to deny human presence in the wilderness on the one hand and "the *having been there* but also the *having to be there* in order to record as work one's being there" on the other.[15] A resultant feature of many of the paintings, Bordo argues, is the presence of a subjective trace in the form of a "symbolic deposit," most often realized in the anthropomorphic form of a foregrounded solitary tree.

In the anthropomorphism of such a construct, the aesthetic necessity to refrain from representing the body directly is circumvented by a landscape-as-body construction, in what I suggest is the second, parallel system of representation in operation in the Group's wilderness images. The subjective trace of the white, male artist is a very different construction from those discussed earlier, in which bodies are consumed by the environment, leaving no trace. Here, the body asserts its dominance over the surrounding landscape, proclaiming itself as a powerful, irreducible, and, crucially, *masculine* entity. For the subjective trace is not merely anthropomorphic, but phallocentric. Having constructed the wilderness environment as masculine, the artist proceeds, by asserting his own presence within it, to emasculate it. Thus the wilderness is simultaneously *conceptualized* as wild, untamed and masculine and *transformed* into a space that is feminine, passive and domesticated. In this way, the complex bidirectional associations between the body and landscape in the Group of Seven's works are able to account both for the problematic erasures upon which their cold, austere, silent worlds are built, and for the many apparent contradictions in their constructions of, and attitudes to, the wilderness.

This site of contradiction, the place at which the body at once becomes landscape and asserts itself as an indomitable force within it, is precisely the site occupied by Atwood's ekphrastic engagement with the Group's wilderness aesthetic in "Death by Landscape." In situating itself within this moment of translation, this narrative, of a young girl "consumed" by the wilderness, implicitly identifies the moment at which the artist leaves the subjective trace that signifies his paradoxical "witnessing" of the wilderness scene—which also represents the point of intersection between the conflicting body-as-landscape and landscape-as-body narratives—as a "weak point" in the Group's representational strategy. The anthropomorphic subjective trace of the artist marks the instant at which temporality is folded into a single instant, and hence also constitutes the starting point for a strategic "unfolding" of the narratives contained in this instant. In so configuring her narrative, Atwood suggests that the paradox of the "witnessed" wilderness to some extent compromises the "emptiness" of the Group's landscapes, and that the site of this witnessing is also the site at which the "ghosts" of the figures erased by them might leave their own traces.

"Death by Landscape" opens with a detailed ekphrastic description of a collection of Group of Seven art owned by its protagonist, Lois:

> They are paintings, or sketches and drawings, by artists who were not nearly as well known when Lois began to buy them as they are now. Their work has turned up on stamps, or as silkscreen reproductions hung in the principals' offices of high schools, or as jigsaw puzzles, or on beautifully printed calendars sent out by corporations as Christmas gifts, to their less important clients. These artists painted mostly in the twenties and thirties and forties; they painted landscapes. Lois has two Tom Thomsons, three A.Y. Jacksons, a Lawren Harris. She has an Arthur Lismer, she has a J.E.H. Macdonald. She has a David Milne. They are pictures of convoluted tree trunks on an island of pink wave-smoothed stone, with more islands behind; of a lake with rough, bright, sparsely wooded cliffs; of a vivid river shore with a tangle of bush and two beached canoes, one red, one grey; of a yellow autumn woods [*sic*] with the ice-blue gleam of a pond half-seen through the interlaced branches.[16]

As the story progresses, we learn that Lois keeps these paintings not because they give her pleasure but because they remind her of a traumatic incident from her childhood: "Looking at them fills her with a wordless unease. Despite the fact that there are no people in them or even animals, it's as if there is something, or someone, looking back out."[17] The narrative behind Lois's unease, which the story proceeds to deliver from the still images it depicts, is one which directly references the body-landscape mechanics of erasure in operation in the Group's paintings. It concerns the disappearance, while on a canoeing trip from summer camp, of a much younger Lois's friend Lucy in(to) a hostile wilderness environment replete with instantly recognizable tropes from Group of Seven landscapes. Strikingly, the girls at the camp take on quasi-native identities and emulate what they

believe to be native dress and customs; they aspire "to be adventurous and pure, and aboriginal."[18]

This doubly-inscribed construction—Atwood's young girls masquerading as aboriginal peoples—is not, it is important to note, an unproblematic one. The conflation of the privileged Lois and Lucy (this is *summer camp*, after all!) with Canada's disenfranchised First Nations peoples is a distinctly uneasy one, and constructs a rather crudely essentialist "marginalized" subject. Nevertheless, it is also a strategic conflation: as Lucy's subsequent, unexplained disappearance into the Group of Seven landscape attests, there is no place for her—nor for any of the various identities Atwood assigns her—in this inhospitable world. The only traces of humanity permitted here are those that conform to the paradigmatically white, male, wilderness-savvy Tom Thomson archetype—a figure who is pointedly absent from Atwood's narrative.

Operating counter-discursively enables Atwood to occupy the same discursive space as the "text" she is writing back to—in this case, the bounded, framed space of the Group of Seven canvas. By introducing into this space a character who stands for those who are Other to the Group's aggressively Euro-masculine constructions of nation, Atwood effectively "envoices" the "silent objects" of the colonialist landscape painting, while simultaneously enacting the violence of their suppression. The strategic construction of Lucy as feminine-native re-presents the silent figures excluded from the Group's landscapes, and temporally reproduces the instantaneous erasure of the Other as a traumatic narrative of disappearance. Thus transformed, the trope of erasure is manifested in the suggestion of a literal body-landscape translation which forms the zero-ground of Lois's traumatic relationship with the paintings:

> But a dead person is a body; a body occupies space, it exists somewhere. You can see it; you put it in a box and bury it in the ground, and then it's in a box in the ground. But Lucy is not in a box, or in the ground. Because she is nowhere definite, she could be anywhere. [...] Who knows how many trees there were on the cliff just before Lucy disappeared? Who counted? Maybe there was one more, afterwards.[19]

Atwood's story, then, is effective not only in identifying—and hence reversing—the narrative of erasure underlying the Group's constructions of the Canadian wilderness, but also in its implicit identification of the site of the narrative tensions contained within the moment of representation. Its ekphrastic engagement with the Group of Seven's wilderness aesthetic at once exposes the imperialist discursive assumptions underlying their paintings, and destabilizes the very representative processes by which they are produced and disseminated.

"Death by Landscape" is paradigmatically counter-discursive, working from within the discourses of imperialist representation to contest and subvert them. It at once demonstrates the potent discursive force of non-literary modes of imperialist representation such as the landscape painting, and the effectiveness with which literary works are able to engage counter-discursively

with such modes. Such sites of interartistic engagement between the literary and the visual form powerful loci in which the aesthetic and the ideological may be reconciled, allowing the discourses surrounding such non-narrative modes of imperial representation as the landscape painting to emerge into a contestable space. To read a work such as "Death by Landscape," then, is to be propelled beyond the frame of the silent, static landscape painting and into the lived space beyond—a space not just of conquest but of contest; a space constantly in flux, perpetually reframing its views and rewriting its stories. To occupy this site of intersection, where art and literature vie with each other to tell us the truth about the world we inhabit, is perhaps ultimately only to be reminded of the fragmentary nature of representation. It is here, finally, that we are confronted by the realization that reading and seeing are at best partial ways of knowing place, ways of knowing which may make sense only within an interdisciplinary matrix where they are free to collide, overlap and engage each other in dialogue.

Notes

1 Many of the central critical texts concerning the Group of Seven's imaginative legacy (including works by several authors whom I reference here) are now available in excerpted form in the collection *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art*, edited by John O'Brian and Peter White (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

2 W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," In *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 10.

3 James A.W. Heffernan, "Ekphrasis and Representation," *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 (1991): 31-2.

4 Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 219.

5 Ibid., 219.

6 Scott Watson, "Race, Wilderness, Territory and the Origins of Modern Canadian Landscape Painting," *Semiotext(e) 6*, no. 2 (1994), 94.

7 Ibid., 94.

8 Ibid., 93.

9 J. Douglas Porteous, "Bodyscape: The Body-Landscape Metaphor,." *The Canadian Geographer* 30, no. 1 (1986): 2.

10 Northrop Frye, "Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada." In *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Concord, ON: Anansi, 1995), 219.

11 Sherrill E. Grace, *Inventing Tom Thomson: From Biographical Fictions to Fictional Autobiographies and Reproductions* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 9-10.

12 Scott Watson, Race, Wilderness, Territory, 100.

[13] Scott Watson, "Disfigured Nature: The Origins of the Modern Canadian Landscape," In *Eye of Nature*, ed. Dana Augaitis and Helga Pakasaar (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1991), 104-5, my emphasis.

[14] Oil on canvas, 86.9 cm x 112.2 cm. The painting is in the collection of the Canadian War Museum, and can be viewed online at http://collections.civilization.ca/public/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn = 1078585.

[15] Jonathan Bordo, "Jack Pine – Wilderness Sublime Or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, no. 4 (1992): 117.

[16] Margaret Atwood, "Death by Landscape," In *Wilderness Tips* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1991) 110.

[17] Ibid., 110.

[18] Ibid., 118.

[19] Ibid., 128-129.

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